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United States Department
of Agriculture
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20250

News Releases and other News Material

Number 11193

November 1 - November 5, 1993

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Remarks-

Prepared for Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy
to the Commonwealth Club of California
San Francisco, California
October 29, 1993

"U.S. Agriculture: The Clinton Program"

I appreciate the opportunity to address this distinguished group -- those of you here in San Francisco as well as those of you joining us by radio.

Just a week ago today, I was in Shanghai on the last leg of a 14-day visit to Japan, Hong Kong, and China. For me, it was an incredible trip; it was a positive trip; it was a productive trip. It was in fact, my first trip into much of that region.

But it's certainly good to be back. I appreciate the fact that this time zone is a little bit closer to home, and I really do appreciate the fact that I don't see "sea slugs" on the lunch menu this afternoon.

In the last 10 months that I've been privileged to serve this President as his Secretary of Agriculture, it really seems as if we've been chasing problem after problem.

I've traveled to about 40 states so far, and as you might imagine, sometimes dozens of times -- in particular, the upper Midwest and its floods.

And I've also been to several foreign countries to talk about President Bill Clinton's vision for the Department of Agriculture and more than that -- his vision for U.S. agriculture. I can sum his vision up in really one word --CHANGE.

I share President Bill Clinton's belief that fundamental change is necessary in the way that we do business within the Government at large and in the USDA particular. And I've spent the last ten months talking in some degree of detail about how we are going to achieve such changes for and with American agriculture.

We started after all when I'd only been in office for about two days, trying to change the ways we inspect our meat and poultry in America. Assuring the public that we continue to have the safest food supply in the world, but also to tell them that we must embrace change -- that we cannot continue to inspect meat and poultry in 1993 the same way we did in 1933.

We talked about changes in pesticide laws and input.

We talked about changes in crop insurance.

We talked about changes in timber management.

About changes in the way we upgrade the less populated rural areas of our country.

We went to an elementary school in Washington, DC, -- Ellen Haas, Assistant Secretary for Food and Consumer Services, and I -- and we tried to get kids to eat a different kind of diet based on low sodium and less fat.

We talked about changes in the food stamp program -- to make it more efficient and to have it cost less money.

We talked about changes in how we integrate science within our programs at the USDA to add nutritive value to foods and to create innovative non-food uses for agricultural products.

And then of course, lately I've been talking a great deal about changes in structure of the USDA -- this \$62 billion agency with 110,000 employees with 43 divisions spread out in 14,000 offices in the United States and all across the world.

But the bottom line is that we still have to pay attention to the issue of farm income. That is absolutely the bottom line.

The President and I of course are from small-towns -- from that part of America known as rural America. We know the impact it has on the economies of rural America when farmers live so close to the financial margin that it seems sometimes they fall off. We know that America as a whole cannot move forward if rural America is left behind.

Speaking as Secretary of Agriculture, I can tell you positively that the Clinton Administration is fully and deeply committed to making a positive difference in the future of American agriculture -- and this means a marked increase in income to producers.

This Secretary of Agriculture and this Administration believe that one of the best and most effective ways to increase farm income is through free and successful competition in the global marketplace. We know -- and we believe -- that exports are essential to our agricultural prosperity.

Why? Simply because the crop production from three out of every ten U.S. acres is sold to a consumer somewhere in another part of the world. That means that we export every year approximately one-fifth of the value of our total U.S. agricultural output.

That is why I felt honored to have been able to lead a delegation last week to the Pacific Rim -- economically one of the fastest growing areas of the world. We were in search of new and improved markets for U.S. agriculture -- markets where our farmers can break through doors if necessary to sell our products to other places.

I consider one of my jobs as Secretary is to help the President become the Number One Salesman for what we grow, and we certainly had our best sales pitch ready for our Asian friends.

I am humble to realize that I had the honor of being the first Clinton cabinet official to visit China. As a matter of fact, no Secretary of Agriculture has visited China in 13 years. Mr. Voss you'll be there in a week or so with the Governor of California, and we've got a story to tell you.

And let me tell you my friends: we came, we saw -- and we sold.

You may have heard that about two days ago, Japan made a sizeable purchase of U.S. bulk rice -- table rice. Fifteen thousand metric tons of U.S. rice, California rice, will soon be on its way west.

We believe that this historic sale will soon be followed by the purchase of what even our Japanese friends call "a considerable amount." How's that for specificity?

These first purchases will be coming from California, but I'm sure that all of the rice-growing states in America will feel an economic impact from a new movement here.

In China, we also had a very productive visit. We took the first step towards solving the 30-year-old problem of Chinese quarantine of U.S. wheat from the Pacific Northwest. I'm confident that we started a dialogue which will soon in an expeditious way result in more wheat sales to China -- a market of over a billion people -- a billion consumers .

However, we brought home a great deal more than just sales of American bulk commodities. We brought home a vision of the future of U.S. agriculture, and let me tell you -- that future is happening in Asia today.

I saw for myself that our domestic future must include an intensified relationship with the Asian nations, particularly in the field of agriculture -- of course that's where my chief concerns lie.

I am firmly convinced that agriculture can ... and should ... take the lead in strengthening the overall U.S. economic relationship with Asian nations, and that this leadership role can pay great dividends for our political relationship as well.

Because after all, politicians can argue, and diplomats can debate, but people must eat. And that food can be grown right here in the United States.

In the two fastest growing regions of the world, Asia and Latin America, we have sales to make, we have mouths to feed, and we have consumers to satisfy.

That, by the way, is just one more reason why we must pass the North American Free Trade Agreement -- for people.

I. IMPORTANCE OF PACRIM MARKETS TO U.S. AGRICULTURE

Just why are these Pacific Rim customers so important?

First, they are already our largest agricultural markets:

-- Japan, our largest single-country export market, purchased U.S. agricultural products worth \$8.2 billion in 1993 -- despite those high Japanese tariffs that we criticize and complain about. Exports to Japan comprised nearly 20 percent of our total agricultural exports. I walked through a supermarket in Tokyo where the shelves were literally filled with American products.

When I was there I reached into the apple bin and I picked up a bright red juicy Japanese apple. I was shocked when that apple cost me \$5.80. People asked me, "Why don't you eat it?"

I said, "Heck, I'm not going to eat it. It cost so much, I'm going to take it home and bronze it....." I can guarantee that Japanese consumers will welcome the approaching opening of the market to U.S. apples in 1994.

And American consumers ought to be again reminded that we enjoy the most abundant food supplies in the world for relatively the lowest prices to be found anywhere.

-- Hong Kong and China together take an additional \$1.5 billion in annual U.S. exports -- and with over a billion consumers in an explosive economy, this dollar figure will increase rapidly.

-- Mexico, also a PACRIM country, (and one I visited in August where I cut the ribbon on the largest trade show ever in U.S. history) imports over \$3 billion worth of goods from us annually -- and NAFTA will increase that -- to a dramatic degree. It will level out some hills, some of the bumps, and some of the gullies in the economic playing fields.

No one, even Ross Perot, doubts the vast market potential of these countries -- or their desire for closer relations with the United States -- in agriculture and all across the board. Yet, as vibrant as they are, these markets have significant roadblocks to the sale of American products.

We have quotas -- we have tariffs -- we have other restrictions -- which serve to hurt us all and underscore not only the need for success in ongoing multilateral trade negotiations like the Uruguay Round -- but also for intensified bilateral relations.

So that's the situation in numbers. But we all know that numbers don't always tell the full story. So let me share with some personal impressions of my trip to Hong Kong, Japan, and south China, which I hope will convey to you why our bilateral relations with these countries are so important.

Two Sundays ago I got up early with Ambassador Roy in Beijing and took a two-hour bike ride through the back streets of Beijing. If you want to see the true Beijing, get on a bike with millions of others.

At 7 a.m. on Sunday morning, we saw an energetic, vibrant city already bustling and ready to face the day: vendors on bicycles hawking their wares -- shoppers bargaining over fresh vegetables -- chickens squawking because they were being carried off to become Sunday dinner.

Even at that time of the morning, I felt a tangible current of energy, excitement, and entrepreneurial spirit -- very different from what I admit was a preconceived notion of mine of somber legions of individuals in blue and gray Mao suits. It wasn't true. People wear what they want -- and they eat what they want.

They are increasingly independent, particularly in the economic zones around Shenzhen and Guangdong providence. They are becoming increasingly affluent and prosperous. And the long lines at the McDonald's in Shenzhen confirmed that.

China -- and all of Asia -- is hungry for more than just a Big Mac. People want a relationship with the United States at all levels -- political, trade, business, and personal.

My observations can be summed up by what is by now almost a truism: The U.S. -- and U.S. agriculture -- can't afford to let this opportunity pass us by. If we do not play a present role in the PACRIM's growth and development, we will not play a role in their future. And like the kids say, "we're history...."

Well, I'll tell you my friends -- this Clinton Administration doesn't want to BE history. We want to MAKE history. Overall, our trade policy is an extension of our economic policy. It centers on the understanding that our national prosperity and the economic future of our children depend on our ability to compete in the global marketplace.

Farm income is a common international concern. Down in south Japan, I asked a Japanese rice farmer who would take over his farm when he retired -- he was about 50 years old. He told me very proudly that he worked hard so he could leave the farm to his son. I turned to his teenage son and asked, "What do you think about that?" Now, I don't speak any Japanese, but I do speak a little "teenager" -- and as best as I can translate, he said, "No way."

A conversation like that could have taken place anywhere across the nation --outside of Toledo just as easily as outside of Tokyo. All over the world, governments are concerned with keeping young people in agriculture -- we can only do that by keeping agriculture profitable. And all over the world, one of the best solutions is the same -- lowering trade barriers.

As California farmers and agribusiness know only too well, the future in demand growth and income growth for U.S. agriculture lies abroad. Yet, disappointingly, up to this point the rank and file of our producers, particularly those small farmers in the United States, have not derived as much income as we would like from our trade successes. Unless we expand trade to help them share in our export success, we may have to resort to other means such as increasing domestic farm loan rates.

JAPAN:

If I can turn once again to my trip again to illustrate the concrete benefits of a global trading environment for Americans.

In Japan, we spent a great deal of time talking about the need for substantial progress toward a quick completion of the Uruguay Round of GATT. We stressed in no uncertain terms that the GATT is essential to the future of our entire global economy -- and that does include Japanese tariffication -- and that does include rice.

Mother Nature helped my argument. The night before these discussions with my counterpart Mr. Hata, there was an earthquake in Japan -- a four on the Richter scale -- small potatoes to you Californians. But it was my first earthquake, and it was definitely a ten on my personal scale.

But it was better than any example I could have manufactured. The next day I pointed out to Mr. Hata how even the best human intentions pale in the face of the power of nature. No matter what policy we mortals try to make -- typhoons can cause a rice shortfall -- floods and droughts can damage a year's crop of corn and soybeans in the upper Midwest.

We cannot guarantee food security because Mother Nature can always intervene and destroy our best-laid intentions. The only way to food security is through change -- dropping barriers, opening markets, and allowing purchases from world supplies. Approval of GATT is a major step toward a freer worldwide market and better economic security for all. We are hopeful and we are expectant that we will reach a GATT conclusion by the appointed day of December 15.

CHINA:

In China, we talked TCK wheat smut and tree fruit. The government imposes a large number of phytosanitary restrictions on U.S. products -- restrictions which, upon inspection, seem to use to be neither reasonable nor based in science.

We visited a large open-air market in Shenzhen, we saw piles and piles of red, shiny apples -- with the Washington State sticker still on them! Of course, it's illegal to import U.S. fruit into that part of China.

So I pointed out to my hosts this contradiction. I said that since the fruit was going to get there anyway -- because the people wanted these apples -- they were cheaper -- and in my opinion they are better -- we might as well accept this fact. We might as well recognize it and make it easier -- and cheaper -- for people to buy. After all, if governments won't supply what the people want -- the gray market will! I wanted them to acknowledge those Washington apples were there -- but frankly, they weren't there very long because the people bought them...

Restrictions on American products are addressed in the 1992 Market Access Memorandum of Understanding between our two countries -- which has been "more honored in the breach than in the observance."

While we were disappointed that not all of these issues were resolved by the initial October 10 deadline, I received -- in what is called the signed Minutes of our discussion -- firm commitments on two critical points:

1. A commitment to resolve by December 31 of this year the long-standing ban on the imports of Pacific Northwest wheat affected by the TCK wheat smut spore. We'll join a working group which will convene in Beijing on November 8 and get right to work.
2. A commitment to resolve the full range of other agricultural phytosanitary issues in the Memorandum of Understanding -- including the medfly -- within the same year-end timeframe.

Now, I'm not the Secretary of State, but under his direction and under his watchful eye, we talked with Vice Premier Zhu about what it's going to take to approve and extend the Most Favored Nation status to China. We talked about human rights, non-proliferation, and trade matters. We put these issues on the table during our visit, and I'm very hopeful that we'll see progress there.

II. A VISION OF NEW PACRIM AGRICULTURAL RELATIONSHIP

As important as they are, the resolution of these thorny bilateral issues is only a small part of the challenges we face in building an overall, strong, mutually beneficial relationship for U.S. agriculture and the PACRIM countries. I know that my time is running out, but I want to just share with you very briefly a three-prong strategy specifically for PACRIM trade.

1. Rebuilding our markets for bulk commodities. We've lost some our traditional markets over the last decade.
2. Directing our marketing efforts to consumer-oriented, high-value, value-added products.
3. Increasing efforts to broaden the base of our agricultural relationship beyond trade. Doing more things like we've done with the Cochran program --where Chinese farmers can come across the Pacific and interact with American farmers and the reverse can also be true.

Together, these three goals can form a sturdy three-legged stool. We can stand on this stool to reach higher and further to achieve a greater degree of trade and cooperation in agriculture -- which can then lead to improved relations in other areas.

To achieve these basic goals in the Asian countries, we might need to make some changes in the philosophy which governs the tools that we in the government have available -- that we have for supporting the private sector sales around the world. I'd like to suggest what I might call another group of three -- the "3 R's" of increased agricultural trade: Re-organize, Re-emphasize, and Re-target.

1. REORGANIZE

Reorganization is essential. We're trying now to complete a reorganization of the USDA. That includes more than just moving boxes around on a flow chart. It means that we are now asking every program manager the most basic questions -- why do you exist? who do you serve? and how well do you serve your customers? And these same questions are also being asked of our export programs.

We're taking a hard look at what's in our export toolbox. Of course we have our familiar shield for defense -- the EEP. And we have our sword -- MPP and GSM -- to cut through dense thickets of tariffs, to open up markets, and to clear the way to develop them.

Both our "sword" and our "shield" are in need of a little spit, a little polish, and elbow grease but the basic purpose they serve -- to allow U.S. agriculture to compete in an unfair world marketplace -- is as valid today as when they were first created.

2. RE-EMPHASIS

Re-emphasis is pretty straightforward. "Grown in America" has a nice ring to it. We've got to reemphasize -- to talk loudly and clearly about our pride in U.S. agriculture.

3. RE-TARGET

And thirdly, re-targeting -- not so simple but very necessary. I think that we probably need to begin to consider moving toward focusing on emerging markets -- and not just on emerging democracies.

I am not suggesting that we turn our back on Russia and the CIS states. I am not suggesting that we turn our back on Europe. I am simply suggesting that we expand trade in an additional direction to more fully include Asian and Latin American nations.

That's why we want to conclude NAFTA. That's why regional trading arrangements such as APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) are so very necessary, because they facilitate global relations.

Let me conclude by saying that we're committed to change, but we're also committed to SECURITY. This Administration is committed to an domestic plan that embraces reducing our budget deficit, reforming health care, reinventing government, increasing personal safety, improving education, training workers, and investing in technology -- all to build a more productive and competitive economy.

Clearly, clearly, our trade policy is a very important part of that economic security. And our trade policy is based on CHANGE -- change that has already occurred because we are now in this post-Cold War economy.

And we are committed to change that will open up new markets as a key to new job creation and stronger economic growth.

Just last week, in the clear light of an autumn morning, the Great Wall of China stretched out like a gigantic serpent resting its incredible length on hill after hill; after mountain after mountain. This great human achievement was state-of-the-art security when it was built to keep out invaders --forever -- or so they thought. But it was static, it was unchanging, and it eventually failed.

On this particular morning, the Great Wall was successfully invaded again --by American tourists who were drawn by its historic symbolism. One of them -- Mike Espy -- fulfilled a lifelong dream to stand on the Great Wall of China.

And standing there, I couldn't help but see another symbolism -- another hope -- for some time in the not-too-distant future. The hope that -- through change -- the paper barriers of restrictive trade laws -- today's "great walls" -- today's obstacles to free trade, may someday also be the stuff of history books.

Thank you for allowing me to be here.

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News Releases-

Release No. 0908.93
Bruce Merkle (202) 720-8206

CCC INTEREST RATE FOR NOVEMBER REMAINS AT 3-3/8 PERCENT

WASHINGTON, Nov. 1 -- Commodity loans distributed in November by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation will carry a 3-3/8 percent interest rate, according to Grant Buntrock, executive vice president of the CCC.

The 3-3/8 percent interest rate is the same as October's 3-3/8 percent and reflects the interest rate charged CCC by the U.S. Treasury in November.

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Release No. 0914.93
Clarence Steinberg (202) 720-6179

USDA INCREASES FEES FOR EGG, POULTRY AND RABBIT GRADING

WASHINGTON, Oct. 2 -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture increased fees for certain grading and inspection services for eggs, poultry, rabbits, and egg products, effective October 1.

Lon S. Hatamiya, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said, "The fee increases are needed to offset increased salaries and fringe benefits of federal employees and federally licensed state employees providing the service. In addition, the costs for assistance from the Office of the General Counsel and anticipated standardization activities have been added as direct grading and inspection program costs."

Hourly fees for voluntary, i.e., industry-requested, grading will rise from \$22.24 to \$23.48 for resident service (work of a grader with a regular tour of duty at a plant); from \$30.12 to \$31.44 for non-resident service (intermittent, "as needed," grading); and from \$30.52 to \$32.88 for non-resident grading work on weekends and holidays.

The administrative fee for USDA supervision of voluntary grading and for other overhead expenses will increase from \$.030 to \$.034 per case of shell eggs and from \$.00025 to \$.00029 per pound of poultry in plants using the resident grading program.

The minimum administrative fee for poultry and eggs per monthly billing period will rise from \$175 to \$200, and the maximum fee will rise from \$1,750 to \$2,000. The minimum administrative fee for grading rabbits will rise from \$175 to \$200 per monthly billing period.

The Egg Products Inspection Act requires that costs of services other than basic inspection during a normal 40-hour week be paid by the user. In this regard, hourly rates for mandatory egg products inspection services will increase from \$22.72 to \$23.80 for overtime inspection and from \$16.04 to \$16.24 for holiday inspection. The special inspection fees were last increased in November 1992.

Hourly fees in egg products plants will also rise from \$25.44 to \$26.64 for voluntary appeal gradings or inspections, and for certain mandatory appeal inspections.

Grading services administered by USDA are made available upon request and paid for by the users. The Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 requires user fees to be reasonable and, as nearly as possible, equal to the cost of the service. Current fees have been in effect since November 1992.

The grading and inspection fee increases are published as a final rule in the Oct. 26 Federal Register. Copies are available from Janice L. Lockard, Chief, Standardization Branch, Poultry Division, AMS, USDA, Room 3944-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456, tel. (202) 720-3506.

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Release No. 0916.93

Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623

Tom Amontree (202) 720-4623

RUSSIA MAKES \$148-MILLION DOLLAR PAYMENT TO COMMODITY CREDIT CORPORATION

MINNESOTA, Nov. 2 -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) received the first of three arrearage installments from the Russian Federation. The \$148.7 million payment was due by close of business Nov. 1, in order for Russia to be in compliance with the terms of the U.S.-Russian Bilateral Agreement, a part of Russia's rescheduling arrangement with Western creditor nations.

"The Russians paid promptly and in full and we view this as a significant step forward to improving the commercial relationship by an extremely important customer for U.S. agriculture," said Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy.

Additional payments of equal amounts are due Nov. 30 and the end of December. These payments would clear all arrears to CCC in connection with earlier allocations of GSM-102 credit guarantees of the former Soviet Union.

Once the payments are made the Russian Federation will be evaluated for creditworthiness through CCC's standard review process.

"Nothing is automatic, but this is clearly a very positive step," Espy said. "The payment at least allows the United States to think again about commercial programming options and hopefully, a speedy return of normalized commercial trade between the two countries."

The most recent U.S. agricultural sales to Russia have taken place under the concessional Food for Progress initiative announced by President Clinton in his Vancouver summit with President Yeltsin. Shipments under this program are ongoing and are expected to cover Russian import needs through the end of the calendar year.

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USDA PROTECTS 27 NEW PLANT VARIETIES

WASHINGTON, Nov. 2 -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture has issued certificates of protection to developers of 27 new varieties of seed-reproduced plants including alfalfa, bean, corn, cowpea, tall fescue, pea, annual ryegrass and perennial ryegrass.

Kenneth H. Evans, an official with USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service in Washington, D.C., said developers of the new varieties will have the exclusive right to reproduce, sell, import and export their products in the United States for 18 years. Certificates of protection are granted after a review of the breeders' records and claims that each new variety is novel, uniform and stable.

The following varieties have been issued certificates of protection:

- the 5333 variety of alfalfa, developed by Pioneer Hi-Bred International Inc., Des Moines, Iowa;
- the Celtic variety of garden bean, developed by the Rogers NK Seed Company, Boise, Idaho;
- the LH165, LH166, LH167, LH172, LH184 and LH224 varieties of corn, developed by Holden's Foundation Seeds Inc., Williamsburg, Iowa;
- the ICI581 variety of corn, developed by Zeneca Ltd., Slater, Iowa;
- the PHVJ4, PHEM9, PHEW7, PHFA5, PHHH9, PHJR5, PHKE6, PHV57, PHW53 and PHW80 varieties of corn, developed by Pioneer Hi-Bred International Inc., Johnston, Iowa;
- the Carolina Sugar variety of cowpea, developed by Great Plains Research Company Inc., Apex, N.C.;
- the Crewcut variety of tall fescue, developed by Pickseed West Inc., Tangent, Ore.;
- the Trailblazer II variety of tall fescue, developed by Pure-Seed Testing Inc., Hubbard, Ore.;
- the DMC 50-68, DMC 50-05 and DMC 50-33 varieties of pea, developed by the Del Monte Corp., San Francisco, Calif.;
- the Surrey variety of annual ryegrass, developed by the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, Gainesville, Fla.; and
- the Dillon variety of perennial ryegrass, developed by International Seeds Inc., Halsey, Ore.

USDA'S Agricultural Marketing Service administers the plant variety protection program which provides marketing protection to developers of new and distinctive seed-reproduced plants ranging from farm crops to flowers.

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Release No. 0918.93
Bruce Merkle (202) 720-8206**USDA SEEKS COMMENTS ON SUPPLEMENTAL PROPOSED RULE FOR STATE MILK MARKETING ORDERS**

WASHINGTON, Nov. 2 -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced today that it is seeking public comment on a supplemental proposed rule to prohibit excessive manufacturing allowances in state marketing orders for milk. Such regulation would establish procedures for implementing section 102 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990.

Under the supplemental proposed rule, states, to be in compliance, would require plants to pay a price for milk used in the production of cheese or butter and nonfat dry milk that is no less than the respective Class III or Class III-A price effective in the Federal Milk Order operating in the competitive area.

The original proposed rule, published in the June 19, 1992 Federal Register, required that states using product formulas to price milk used to produce butter, nonfat dry milk or cheese, could not use manufacturing allowances greater than those used in the federal price support program. The current federal milk price support program allowances are \$1.22/cwt. for milk used to produce butter and nonfat dry milk and \$1.37/cwt. for milk used to produce cheese.

The supplemental proposed rule was published in the November 1 Federal Register.

Comments on the supplemental proposal, on the original proposal and other options available for implementing section 102 should be sent to: Dr. Charles N. Shaw, Director, Dairy Analysis Division, Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2415, Washington, D.C., 20013. Comments must be received by January 31, 1994 and will be available for public inspection in Room 3754 of USDA's South Building during normal business hours.

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Release No. 0919.93
Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623
Mary Dixon (202) 720-4623

NEW REGULATIONS ON SAFE HANDLING AND COOKING INSTRUCTIONS FOR RAW MEAT AND POULTRY FORWARDED TO FEDERAL REGISTER

WASHINGTON, Nov. 2 -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture has forwarded to the Federal Register, with publication expected on Thursday, a new proposed rule on safe handling and cooking instructions for raw meat and poultry.

"The publication of the proposed rule will mean that consumers will have access to safe handling and cooking instructions that can help keep their families safe," said Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy. "Washington has debated this common sense measure for years. It's time to end the debate and get the information to the consumers. I hope there are no further attempts to hold up progress that can help save lives."

The preamble of the proposed rule states, "The gravity of many cases of illness resulting from E.coli 0157:H7 and the continuing evidence of consumers undercooking hamburgers creates a serious public health problem."

Studies have shown consistently that consumers lack basic knowledge about safe handling and cooking of meat and poultry, including not knowing about cross contamination of raw and cooked foods, the proposed rule adds.

The new proposed rule calls for: a 45-day comment period after date of publication and implementation 30 days after publication of a final regulation. The rule calls for all raw meat and poultry products to be accompanied with safe handling and cooking instructions. Ground and chopped products must have a label upon implementation of the rule and all other products must have a label, sticker or leaflet. The proposed rule requires that on April 15 all products must have the label.

The instructions state that "some food products may contain bacteria that could cause an illness if the product is mishandled or cooked improperly." Further, the instructions advise that "for your protection, follow these safe handling instructions: Keep refrigerated or frozen. Thaw in refrigerator or microwave. Keep raw meat and poultry separate from other foods. Wash working surfaces (including cutting boards), utensils, and hands after touching raw meat or poultry. Cook thoroughly. Keep hot foods hot. Refrigerate leftovers immediately or discard." Information icons or appropriate pictures are matched with the specific instructions.

The publication of the proposed rule follows a court action over a previous final regulation published Oct. 12. That rule was challenged in court by the National American Wholesale Grocers' Association/International Foodservice Distributors Association, the National Grocers Association and the Texas Food Industry Association.

The plaintiffs had argued that the previous expedited comment and implementation period for the labels and instructions were not justified. The USDA had argued that pathogenic outbreaks around the country warranted an expedited rule-making procedure that included a 30-day comment period. During the original comment period, USDA received more than 350 comments and suggestions, some of which were incorporated into the final rule.

The labels and other safe handling information were to be mandated on Oct. 15, but the request for an injunction was granted on Oct. 14 by U.S. District Judge James R. Nowlin in Austin, Texas. Nowlin stated that there was no cause for an expedited rule-making process since E.coli outbreaks are "isolated" and "separate."

Representatives of USDA had argued that illnesses and deaths attributed to E.coli, as well as other pathogens such as salmonella, have occurred all across the nation have not been limited to fast food chains. They cited several cases, including a Michigan child who died this summer from eating an undercooked hamburger at a picnic and another child in New York who died after eating an undercooked meatball.

The proposed rule states: "While the department believes it would prevail on the APA (Administrative Procedures Act) issue in further litigation, it recognizes that a notice and comment rulemaking will take less time than further litigating the APA issue with the plaintiffs.

"Due to the importance of protecting public health and the related need to provide this crucial information to consumers as quickly as possible, the department is publishing today this proposal to amend the regulations to require safe handling instructions on raw and partially cooked meat and poultry products, and a final rule, which is published elsewhere in this issue, that eliminates the provisions in the previously cited rulemakings."

Espy, who is working to improve the nation's meat inspection system, said he applauded industry groups who have opted to place the labels on meat and poultry as mandated in the previous final rule that was halted in the courts. Reports from throughout the country have noted that several grocery stores are voluntarily selling meat and poultry with a safe handling and cooking labels and instructions. The new proposed rule states that the use of the previous label will be allowed for six months following the publication of the upcoming final rule.

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Release No. 0921.93
Alicia L. Ford (202) 720-8998

USDA TO REVISE INSTITUTIONAL PURCHASE SPECIFICATIONS FOR FRESH LAMB AND MUTTON

WASHINGTON, Nov. 3 -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture is seeking comments on a proposed revision of the Institutional Meat Purchase Specifications (IMPS) for Fresh Lamb and Mutton.

The proposal features new items, new fat trim requirements, new quality assurance provisions and modifications to item description requirements.

Lon S. Hatamiya, administrator of the Agricultural Marketing Service, said the changes in the proposed revision will be in the best interest of large volume purchasers of fresh lamb products. The IMPS are used by commercial meat buyers and by schools, hospitals, the Department of Defense and other institutions that buy large quantities of meat.

The IMPS include these three sets of specifications:

- The first set, General Requirements, provides guidelines for refrigeration and packaging;
- The second set is a group of eight code-referenced descriptions of raw beef, lamb, veal and calf, pork, cooked and cured beef, cured pork, variety meats and sausage products. Series 200, covering fresh lamb, is also within this set; and
- The third set, Quality Assurance Provisions, provides guidelines to determine acceptability of IMPS items on a sampling basis.

The proposed revision addresses issues that have been raised by the procurement and production segments of the lamb industry during recent years. The proposed revision would replace the current IMPS for Fresh Lamb, Yearling Mutton and Mutton Series--200, dated January 1975.

Comments are being solicited from individuals, companies and organizations on the IMPS user mailing list, which has representation from both the producing and purchasing segments of the meat industry. Other interested persons may obtain copies of the proposed "Institutional Meat Purchase Specifications for Fresh Lamb and Mutton--Series 200" from Meat Marketing Specialist Steve Olson, USDA, AMS, Livestock and Seed Division, Livestock and Meat Standardization Branch, Rm. 2603-S, Washington, D.C. 20250, tel. (202) 720-4486.

Comments should be received no later than Jan. 15, 1994.

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Release No. 0922.93
 Dianne Odland (301) 436-8617
 Johna Pierce (202) 720-1691

USDA RELEASES COST OF FOOD AT HOME FOR SEPTEMBER

WASHINGTON, Nov. 3 -- Here is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's monthly update of the weekly cost of food at home for September 1993:

COST OF FOOD AT HOME FOR A WEEK IN SEPTEMBER 1993

| | Food plans | | | |
|---|------------|----------|---------------|-------------------------|
| | Thrifty | Low-cost | Moderate-cost | Liberal (in dollars) |
| Families: | | | | |
| Family of 2 (20-50 years) | 50.70 | 63.80 | 78.50 | 97.60 |
| Family of 2 (51 years and over) | 47.90 | 61.40 | 75.50 | 90.10 |
| Family of 4 with preschool children | 74.10 | 92.10 | 112.30 | 137.90 |
| Family of 4 with elementary schoolchildren | 84.70 | 108.20 | 135.10 | 162.50 |
| Individuals in four-person families: | | | | |
| Children: | | | | |
| 1-2 years | 13.50 | 16.30 | 19.00 | 23.00 |
| 3-5 years | 14.50 | 17.80 | 21.90 | 26.20 |
| 6-8 years | 17.60 | 23.50 | 29.40 | 34.20 |
| 9-11 years | 21.00 | 26.70 | 34.30 | 39.60 |
| Males: | | | | |
| 12-14 years | 21.70 | 30.30 | 37.70 | 44.30 |
| 15-19 years | 22.60 | 31.30 | 38.80 | 45.00 |
| 20-50 years | 24.20 | 30.90 | 38.50 | 46.70 |
| 51 and over | 21.90 | 29.40 | 36.10 | 43.20 |
| Females: | | | | |
| 12-19 years | 22.00 | 26.20 | 31.70 | 38.30 |
| 20-50 years | 21.90 | 27.10 | 32.90 | 42.00 |
| 51 and over | 21.60 | 26.40 | 32.50 | 38.70 |

USDA's Human Nutrition Information Service computes the cost of food at home for four food plans -- thrifty, low-cost, moderate-cost, and liberal.

Janice Lilja, HNIS acting administrator, said the plans consist of foods that provide nutritious meals and snacks for a week.

In computing the costs, USDA assumes all food is bought at the store and prepared at home. Costs do not include alcoholic beverages, pet food, soap, cigarettes, paper goods and other nonfood items bought at the store.

"USDA costs are only guides to spending," Lilja said. "Families may spend more or less, depending on such factors as where they buy their food, how carefully they plan and buy, whether some food is produced at home, what foods the family likes, and how much food is prepared at home."

"Most families will find the moderate-cost or low-cost plan suitable," she said. "The thrifty plan, which USDA uses to set the coupon allotment in the food stamp program, is for families who have tighter budgets. Families with unlimited resources might use the liberal plan."

To use the chart to estimate your family's food costs:

-- For members eating all meals at home -- or carried from home -- use the amounts shown in the chart.

-- For members eating some meals out, deduct 5 percent for each meal eaten away from home from the amount shown for the appropriate family member. Thus, for a person eating lunch out 5 days a week, subtract 25 percent, or one-fourth the cost shown.

-- For guests, add 5 percent of the amount shown for the proper age group for each meal.

Costs in the second part of the chart pertain to individuals in four-person families. If your family has more or less than four, total the "individual" figures and make these adjustments (note: larger families tend to buy and use food more economically than smaller ones):

-- For a one-person family, add 20 percent.

-- For a two-person family, add 10 percent.

-- For a three-person family, add 5 percent.

-- For a five- or six-person family, subtract 5 percent.

-- For a family of seven or more, subtract 10 percent.

Details of the four family food plans are available from the Nutrition Education Division, Human Nutrition Information Service, USDA, Federal Building, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

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Release No. 0923.93

Billy Cox (202) 720-3329

U.S. TO DONATE NONFAT DRY MILK TO RUSSIA

WASHINGTON, Nov. 3 -- The United States will donate 680 metric tons of U.S. nonfat dry milk (NFDM) for distribution to needy citizens in the Russian Federation, according to Christopher E. Goldthwait, acting general sales manager for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).

The total value of the donation, provided under Section 416(b) of the Agricultural Act of 1949, is about \$2 million, including \$1.7 million worth of NFDM and \$300,000 in freight costs. USDA will pay for ocean and inland transportation to distribution sites. The supply period of the donation is fiscal 1994.

The Fund For Democracy and Development, a private U.S. voluntary organization, in collaboration with the Russian Salvation Army, will distribute the donated commodities free of charge to social service institutions such as soup kitchens, hospitals, orphanages, schools, and homes for the elderly and the handicapped in Moscow and surrounding areas.

For more information, contact James F. Keefer, FAS (202) 720-5263.

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Release No. 0926.93

Bruce Merkle (202) 720-8206

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM 1994 FISCAL YEAR PAYMENTS TO TOTAL \$1.8 BILLION

WASHINGTON, Nov. 4 -- Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy today announced that cash payments of more than \$1.8 billion are being made to qualified producers on 375,000 contracts in the Commodity Credit Corporation's Conservation's (CCC) Reserve Program.

"I'm pleased that the Commodity Credit Corporation is making these payments, which are essential to many producers," Espy said.

Espy said that of the \$1.8 billion, more than \$956 million of the fiscal year 1994 CRP payments are being made to producers in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin, states impacted by flooding and excessive rainfall.

The annual rental payments are made under contracts producers signed to enroll cropland in the CRP during crop years 1986-1992.

Under the CRP program, producers retire from production for 10-15 years eligible cropland that is highly erodible or contributing to a serious water quality problem. In return, CCC makes annual rental payments to the producers and shares with them the cost of establishing an approved vegetative cover. To date, 36.4 million acres have been enrolled in the CRP.

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Release No. 0928.93

Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623

Mary Dixon (202) 720-4623

ESPY CHALLENGES INDUSTRY TO VOLUNTARILY USE SAFE HANDLING AND COOKING LABELS FOR RAW MEAT AND POULTRY

(USDA TO DISTRIBUTE SAFE HANDLING AND COOKING POSTERS AT FEEDING SITES)

WASHINGTON, Nov. 5 -- With recent reports of possible E.coli 0157:H7 outbreaks in Texas, Washington State and Idaho, Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy has challenged the food industry to voluntarily use safe handling and cooking labels and leaflets for meat and poultry.

In addition, Espy has directed the Food and Nutrition Service, the USDA agency that implements the department's nutrition programs, to print safe handling and cooking posters. The posters will be distributed to sites that receive USDA products, such as homeless shelters, orphanages and soup kitchens.

"Until we develop the science to improve the meat inspection system, we need to spread the word about safe handling and cooking as soon as possible," said Espy. "While meat and poultry products are not the sole source of E.coli, I am challenging the meat processing industry and grocery outlets to voluntarily use labels and safe handling information until they are mandated in a few months.

"I applaud grocery stores and processing plants that are already voluntarily placing safe handling and cooking labels on meat and poultry packaging. Safe handling and cooking of meat and poultry can help to prevent illnesses.

"I also want USDA to continue its efforts to ensure that cooks who serve USDA meat and poultry commodities are well aware of safe handling and cooking instructions. The posters will help us spread the word to those who feed thousands of homeless and impoverished families every day."

According to the Texas State Health Department, during October, seven reports of illness which may have been caused by E.coli 0157:H7 were reported in the state. The Texas officials have also reported the death of two children due to hemolytic uremic syndrome, a complication associated with E.coli. In eastern Washington State and western Idaho, there are seven cases of infection that have recently been reported and in Bellingham, Wash., there are reports of two children being ill who have recently eaten at a homeless shelter.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, which receives reports from state health departments from around the country on a voluntary basis, some other reports of clusters of E.coli infections this year have come from Illinois, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Oregon, Connecticut, Montana, New Mexico, Massachusetts, California, and Maine.

Earlier this year in Washington State, three children and one adult died due to E.coli.

The USDA is working closely with local health officials in all the cases.

The safe handling and cooking labels currently are being attached voluntarily by some businesses to meat and poultry products while the USDA moves forward through an administrative process to mandate them. The label notes that some food products may contain bacteria that can cause an illness if mishandled or cooked improperly. The label further notes that raw meat and poultry should be: refrigerated or frozen and thawed in a refrigerator or microwave; kept separate from other foods and working surfaces, while hands and utensils should be washed after touching raw meats; cooked thoroughly; and refrigerated immediately or discarded.

The labels and other safe handling information were to be mandated nationwide on Oct. 15 but a request for an injunction was granted on Oct. 14 by U.S. District Judge James R. Nowlin in Austin, Texas. Nowlin stated that there was no cause for an expedited rule-making process since E.coli outbreaks are isolated and separate.

The plaintiffs in the case were the National American Wholesale Grocers' Association/International Foodservice Distributors Association, the National Grocers Association and the Texas Food Industry Association. They had argued that the original 30-day comment period for the labels was too short. The USDA had argued that outbreaks around the country warranted an expedited rule-making procedure that included a 30-day comment period. During the comment period, USDA received more than 350 comments and suggestions, some of which were incorporated into the final rule.

The new proposed rule, which was published this week in the Federal Register, calls for: a 45-day comment period after date of publication and implementation 30 days after publication of a final regulation. The rule calls for all raw meat and poultry products to be accompanied with safe handling and cooking instructions. Ground and chopped products must have a label upon implementation and all other products must have a label, sticker or leaflet. On April 15, all product must have the label.

The proposed rule states: "While the department believes it would prevail on the APA (Administrative Procedures Act) issue in further litigation, it recognizes that a notice and comment rulemaking will take less time than further litigating the APA issue with the plaintiffs.

"Due to the importance of protecting public health and the related need to provide this crucial information to consumers as quickly as possible, the department is publishing today this proposal to amend the regulations to require safe handling instructions on raw and partially cooked meat and poultry products, and a final rule, which is published elsewhere in this issue, that eliminates the provisions in the previously cited rulemakings."

"The bottom line is to get the information to the consumer. We are doing that as quickly as possible and call on industry to do the same," said Espy.

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Release No. 0929.93
Jim McKenna (202) 720-1260

\$10 MILLION IN REA GRANTS AWARDED TO EDUCATIONAL, MEDICAL GROUPS NATIONWIDE

WASHINGTON, D.C., Nov. 5 -- The United States Department of Agriculture today awarded \$10 million in grants to 28 education and medical organizations in 26 states to provide advanced telecommunications technology for rural Americans.

Bob J. Nash, USDA Under Secretary for Small Community and Rural Development, said the awards are the first under the agency's Distance Learning and Medical Link Grant Program, established by Congress to shape a new economic future for rural residents.

"The grants represent a beginning step in USDA'S new emphasis under Secretary Mike Espy to alleviate many of the problems that plague rural areas," Nash said. Nash called the rural problems "serious and demanding swift action."

The grants vary from \$25,000 to \$500,000--the maximum size authorized by law--and include 17 that are \$400,000 or more.

The awards demonstrate, Nash said, "the kind of programs the Clinton Administration has in mind to aid rural development, a top administration priority."

The grants will be used for such urgent rural needs, Nash said, as interactive video, encoding devices, video cameras and other telecommunication tools linking education and health services from one rural area to another and to more populated centers.

The program was authorized by the Rural Development Act of 1990, to provide grants to rural community facilities--such as schools, hospitals and medical centers.

It seeks to encourage, improve and make affordable the use of advanced telecommunications and computer networks to provide educational and medical benefits to people living in rural areas and to improve rural opportunities.

The REA has been known for more than 58 years as a lender which brought electric and telephone service to the nation's farms and rural communities.

Examples of Distance Learning and Medical Link projects selected by the REA, following an extensive four-month nationwide review process, are:

-- A consortium of six rural school districts in northeast Pennsylvania will be connected with two postsecondary schools to share staff and resources. The communications network will span 4,000 miles; \$493,595.

-- Public, private, medical and educational institutions in about 200 southwest Alaskan villages and schools will share personnel, equipment, facilities and expertise via a telecommunications delivery system for distance learning and medical linkage; \$500,000.

-- A hospital serving four communities in northeast Kansas, which also has rural health care clinics, will coordinate patient care, education and interactive physician consultation; \$498,800.

-- Because no full-time radiologist is on duty at a country hospital in southern South Carolina, a teleradiology medical link will be established with on-call radiologists in Savannah, Ga.; \$25,000.

Most of the grants will be supplemented by funding from a variety of state and local sources, Nash said.

A total of 19 educational organizations nationwide were granted \$7,496,451 while nine medical groups, the majority of them hospitals, received \$2,503,549. The states of Montana and North Dakota each obtained two grants.

The REA received 180 applications, Nash said, requesting a total of \$57 million in grants. Procedures for applying for them were announced in the Federal Register earlier this year.

The Distance Learning and Medical Link Grant Program was funded for the first time in the 1992 federal budget, then again in 1993. A total of \$5 million was authorized in each budget to account for the \$10 million in funding announced today.

The grant winners by state, organization, location, including a summary of the project and amount, are:

Alaska: Distance Delivery Consortium, Bethel. Establish delivery of telecommunications services by five school districts, university branch, health corporation unit, national guard unit and others; \$500,000.

Arkansas: Baptist Medical Center, Arkadelphia. Establish a 67-mile teleradiology link with the center's flagship facility, in Little Rock, to send patients' images, scans and x-rays for review by specialists; \$49,780.

Colorado: East Central Board of Cooperative Educational Services, Limon. Design an interactive distance learning/communications system among 16 rural communities and schools. It would serve more than 4,000 students, 430 teachers and administrators during schools hours and non-school groups after hours; \$291,301.

Idaho: College of South Idaho, Twin Falls. A dual education and medical communications system, it would link eight counties and schools in a 100-mile radius for educational needs and permit exchange of medical information to improve health care; \$500,000.

Illinois: Shawnee Community College, Ullin. Develop a distance learning telecommunications network to enhance educational opportunities and transmission of information in five rural southern counties. In addition to the college, it would serve 12 small district high schools and training needs of business and industry; \$500,000.

Indiana: Methodist Hospital of Indiana, Indianapolis. Connect rural hospitals in Clinton, Frankfort, Hartford, Newcastle and Peru and a clinic in Gosport, via a fiber optic cable, with Methodist Hospital. Would permit instant transfer of still and video images, and other forms of telecommunications and data; \$183,000.

Kansas: Community Hospital of Onaga, Onaga. Expand exchange of medical information by rural hospitals in Holton, Horton, Onaga and Seneca with St. Francis Hospital, Topeka. Provide managed care by sharing clinical records, toxicology information, teleradiology and distance medical consultation and education; \$498,000.

Kentucky: Clinton County School District, Albany. Restructure educational technology and curriculum around a telecommunications network in cooperation with Berea College and Berea School District, Madison County, via networking and interactive video distance education; \$500,000.

Louisiana: Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Division of Nursing, Shreveport. Health, educational and community enhancement activities, including degree granting and continuing education programs, via distance learning and medical technology, with rural areas of Bunkie, Jonesboro and Winnfield; \$499,900.

Michigan: Upper Great Lakes Educational Technologies, Inc., Marquette. A consortium of hospitals, universities and schools developing telecommunication systems and programs, plans to use grant for a dual technology system for rural medicine and education with emphasis on medical uses; \$373,894.

Minnesota: Independent School District #262, Barrett. Applied on behalf of itself and other school districts located at Elbow Lake, Hoffman and Kensington. Plans to expand fiber optic network to permit students, staff and community members to access wide variety of data and video, interactive shared classes, CD ROM-based services and card catalogs of four libraries; \$221,476.

Missouri: Citizens Memorial Hospital District, Bolivar. Design a medical link system to permit rural physicians to receive laboratory results as soon as they are available. Should improve patient care by permitting quicker diagnosis and treatment; \$180,000.

Montana (2): Deaconess Medical Center, Eastern Montana Telemedicine Project, Billings, and Richey School District, Yellowstone Education Symposium, Richey.

The telemedicine project will use two-way interactive video to deliver medical and mental health care services, continuing medical education and community development initiatives. Users will include five medical and mental health facilities in isolated eastern Montana communities; \$482,910.

The symposium, an alliance of schools districts located in Circle, Glendive, Lambert, Rickey, Savage and Sidney, plans to purchase and install interactive television equipment for an educational network; \$118,012.

North Carolina: University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Division for Public Service. Purchase two-way interactive video equipment to create six distance learning sites in rural areas of Brunswick, Columbus and Pender counties; \$484,452.

North Dakota (2): University of North Dakota, School of Medicine, Grand Forks, and New Dimensions Information Authority, Williston.

The medical school represents a consortium of the 32 smallest hospitals in the state. It plans to establish a distance learning and medical link project to be known as MEDSTAR. It would connect hospitals, doctors, nurses and other rural health professionals via satellite communications; \$497,186.

The authority, a four-county regional library system in the northwest part of the state, plans to develop a computer-based regional union library catalog. Computers and software would be purchased to access collections in 23 schools, three public libraries and a university; \$97,472.

Nevada: University of Nevada, Reno. An application filed by the university, its school of medicine, North Nevada Community College, Elko, and the Nevada Rural Hospital Project.

The partners propose to establish a statewide educational and medical communications system for teleconferencing, audio-computer graphics and computers. Equipment and terminals would be installed at 16 locations; \$400,000.

New York: The Mary Imogene Bassett Hospital, Cooperstown. Establish a dual communications system for medical and learning needs. It would connect with community hospitals in Delhi and Cobleskill and nine outreach centers in five counties; \$494,755.

Oklahoma: Northwest Oklahoma Technology Consortium, Inc., Seiling. Serving 11 high schools and two Vo-Tech districts, the consortium plans an interactive video system for a variety of educational, medical and community applications; \$477,700.

Pennsylvania: Northern Tier Rural Distance Learning Consortium Ltd., Towanda. A consortium of six schools districts and two post-secondary affiliates, it plans to establish an interactive video/audio communications network. The consortium serves the counties of Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga and Wyoming; \$493,595.

South Carolina: Low Country General Hospital, Jasper County. A 31-bed rural hospital, it has no full-time radiologist. It plans to install a teleradiology link with radiologists in Savannah, Ga., to accelerate diagnosis and faster treatment of patients; \$25,000.

South Dakota: North Central Area Interconnect Telecommunications Project, Barnard. A partnership formed by an educational cooperative, university, hospital and others, the grant will be used for classroom distance learning at nine school sites and Northern State University and for educational medical links by rural communities; \$500,000.

Tennessee: Monroe County Schools, Madisonville. Establish a video communications network connecting three high schools and computers at 10 sites, including Hiwassee College, for various types of instruction and staff development. In addition, a medical link component will be set up via Internet; \$486,215.

Texas: Star Independent School District, Star. Establish an educational and medical communications system, to be known as INFO-NET-2, between the central Texas school districts of Goldthwaite, Mullin, Priddy and Star. Schools in the districts will be interconnected to a central location via a fiber optic network; \$481,568.

Virginia: Shenandoah County Public Schools, Woodstock. Grant to used to set up an interactive video distance learning system linking three high schools for courses, adult education, presentations, workshops and extra-curricular activities; \$73,680.

Wisconsin: Western Wisconsin Instructional Network Group, Baldwin. A consortium of 14 small, rural schools districts, a four-year university and a two-year technical college, known as WestWING, it plans to establish a distance learning telecommunications network. Initially the four-county network will serve high schools and provide continuing education to medical personnel; \$500,000.

Wyoming: Tri-Valley Consortium, Jackson. Plans to install equipment for a teleradiology network to send x-rays and other images from hospitals in Afton and Driggs to the hub hospital, St. John's in Jackson, for prompt diagnosis and a better level of care; \$89,304.

The REA plans another round of grants this fiscal year and has set a deadline of Jan. 14 for filing applications. It will be the only application period during the year, Nash said. The agency expects to make about \$10 million in grants.

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Program Announcements-

Releases No. 0915.93
Gene Rosera (202) 720-6734
Charles Hobbs (202) 720-4026

USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET RICE PRICES, MARKETING CERTIFICATE RATES

WASHINGTON, Nov. 2--Under Secretary of Agriculture Eugene Moos today announced the prevailing world market prices of milled rice, loan rate basis, as follows:

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| --long grain whole kernels: | 8.05 cents per pound |
| --medium grain whole kernels: | 7.32 cents per pound |
| --short grain whole kernels: | 7.25 cents per pound |
| --broken kernels: | 4.02 cents per pound |

Based upon these milled rice world market prices, loan deficiency payment (LDP) rates, gains from repaying price support loans at the world market price, and marketing certificate rates are:

| | Loan Gain and LDP Rate | Marketing Certificate Rate \$/Cwt..... |
|---------------------|---------------------------|--|
| --for long grain: | \$1.68 | \$0.00 |
| --for medium grain: | \$1.52 | \$0.00 |
| --for short grain: | \$1.50 | \$0.00 |

These announced prices and rates are effective today at 3 p.m. EST. The next scheduled price announcement will be made Nov. 9 at 3 p.m. EST.

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Release No. 0927.93
 Janise Zygmont (202) 720-6734
 Carol Childers (202) 720-4026

USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET PRICE AND USER MARKETING CERTIFICATE PAYMENT RATE FOR UPLAND COTTON

WASHINGTON, Nov. 4--Grant Bunrock, executive vice president of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation, today announced the prevailing world market price, adjusted to U.S. quality and location (adjusted world price or AWP), for Strict Low Middling (SLM) 1-1/16 inch (leaf grade 4, micronaire 3.5-3.6 and 4.3-4.9, strength 24-25 grams per tex) upland cotton (base quality), and the coarse count adjustment (CCA) in effect from 5:00 p.m. today through 3:59 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 11. The user marketing certificate payment rate announced today is in effect from 12:01 a.m. Friday, Nov. 5, through midnight Thursday, Nov. 11.

The Agricultural Act of 1949, as amended, provides that the AWP may be further adjusted if: (a) the AWP is less than 115 percent of the current crop year loan rate for base quality upland cotton, and (b) the Friday through Thursday average price quotation for the lowest-priced U.S. growth as quoted for Middling (M) 1-3/32 inch cotton, C.I.F. northern Europe (USNE price) exceeds the Northern Europe (NE) price. The maximum allowable adjustment is the difference between the USNE price and the NE price.

A further adjustment to this week's calculated AWP may be made in accordance with this provision. The calculated AWP is 78 percent of the 1993 upland cotton base quality loan rate, and the USNE price exceeds the NE price by 1.75 cents per pound. Following are the relevant calculations:

| | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| I. | Calculated AWP | 40.77 cents per pound |
| | 1993 Base Loan Rate | 52.35 cents per pound |
| | AWP as a Percent of Loan Rate | 78 |
| II. | USNE Price | 56.15 cents per pound |
| | NE Price | <u>- 54.40</u> cents per pound |
| | Maximum Adjustment Allowed | 1.75 cents per pound |

Based on a consideration of the U.S. share of world exports, the current level of cotton export sales and cotton export shipments, and other relevant data, no further adjustment to this week's calculated AWP will be made.

This week's AWP and coarse count adjustment are determined as follows:

Adjusted World Price

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| NE Price | 54.40 |
| <u>Adjustments:</u> | |
| Avg. U.S. spot market location | 11.82 |
| SLM 1-1/16 inch cotton | 1.50 |
| Avg. U.S. location | 0.31 |
| Sum of Adjustments | <u>- 13.63</u> |
| Calculated AWP | 40.77 |
| Further AWP adjustment | <u>- 0</u> |
| ADJUSTED WORLD PRICE | 40.77 cents/lb. |

Coarse Count Adjustment

| | |
|--|----------------|
| NE Price | 54.40 |
| NE Coarse Count Price | <u>- 50.50</u> |
| | 3.90 |
| Adjustment to SLM 1-1/32 inch cotton | <u>- 3.20</u> |
| COARSE COUNT ADJUSTMENT | 0.70 cents/lb. |

Because the AWP is below 52.35 cents per pound, the base quality loan rate for both the 1992 and 1993 marketing years, the loan repayment rate during this period is equal to the AWP, adjusted for the specific quality and location plus applicable interest and storage charges. The AWP will continue to be used to determine the value of upland cotton that is obtained in exchange for commodity certificates.

Because the AWP is below the 1993-crop loan rate, cash loan deficiency payments (LDPs) will be paid to eligible producers who agree to forgo obtaining a price support loan with respect to the 1993 crop. The payment rate is equal to the difference between the loan rate and the AWP. Producers are allowed to obtain an LDP on a bale-by-bale basis.

The USNE price has exceeded the NE price by more than 1.25 cents per pound for four consecutive weeks and the AWP has not exceeded 130 percent of the 1993 crop year base quality loan rate in any week of the 4-week period. As a result, the user marketing certificate payment rate is 0.50 cents per pound. This rate is applicable during the Friday through Thursday period for bales opened by domestic users and for cotton contracts entered into by exporters for delivery prior to Sept. 30, 1994. Relevant data are summarized below:

| Week | Period Ending | For the | | | User Marketing Certificate Payment Rate |
|------|---------------|---------------|-------------|----------|--|
| | | USNE Price | NE Price | cents/lb | |
| 1 | Oct. 14, 1993 | 58.20 | 55.12 | 1.83 | |
| 2 | Oct. 21, 1993 | 56.60 | 54.51 | 0.84 | |
| 3 | Oct. 28, 1993 | 56.45 | 54.39 | 0.81 | |
| 4 | Nov. 4, 1993 | 56.15 | 54.40 | 0.50 | |

Due to the Veteran's Day holiday, next week's AWP, CCA and user marketing certificate payment rate will be announced on Friday, Nov. 12 at 8 a.m..



Features-

Release No. 0909.93
Susan Conley (202) 690-0351

WHEN IT COMES TO TURKEY, USDA'S HOTLINE EXPERTS HAVE HEARD IT ALL--OR HAVE THEY?

WASHINGTON, Nov. 1 -- Since the U. S. Department of Agriculture's Meat and Poultry Hotline opened in 1985, staff members have answered thousands of questions--ranging from conventional to bizarre--about safe turkey preparation.

This year the hotline expects November to yield more than half the year's questions about turkey. In fact, in those 30 days the hotline will receive 20 percent of all its 1993 calls, a total that should top 138,000. "Most of the calls received just before Thanksgiving will be basic food storage and handling concerns, but there will be a few that stand out and are remembered long after the leftovers have vanished," said hotline manager Susan Conley.

Because November is the busiest month of the year, the toll-free hotline extends its hours. The hotline will be open weekdays, and on Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 20 and 21, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST. Hours on Thanksgiving Day are 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. For help, consumers may phone 1-800-535-4555. Washington, D.C. area residents may call (202) 720-3333.

Callers with touch-tone phones can also find answers to many holiday food safety questions by selecting from a wide variety of recorded messages, which are available 24 hours a day.

Here are a few of the memorable moments in hotline history, along with some food safety advice.

The S.O.S. from the cook's friends and relatives. In this case, S.O.S. stands for "save our stomachs." When well-meaning cooks mishandle food, diners--some of whom may be at increased risk for foodborne illness due to age or underlying health problems--look to the hotline to intercede. One caller dreaded the approaching holiday because her mother-in-law insists on storing the cooked turkey for three or four days unrefrigerated in the garage. A few years ago this caller ended up in the emergency room and six other family members fell ill, but Mom could not be persuaded to refrigerate the turkey.

It's not just physical stamina but the patience of loved ones that is tested. According to another caller, a "domestic dispute" erupted because the turkey was cooked upside down. (There is no problem with this method if the turkey is thoroughly cooked). But the bird was taking longer to cook than expected, and the cook was taking the heat.

The battle with nature. Avoid being drawn into this battle. Thaw frozen turkeys (and keep cooked leftovers) in the refrigerator. The caller whose frozen fowl, kept on the back porch, bore a raccoon's teeth and claw marks lost the fight, as did the woman who put her frozen turkey on the attic floor. Her cat used the bird to play his own version of ice hockey, covering it in the process with bits of attic insulation and other contaminants.

Travel disasters. Because the first rule of food safety is "Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold," callers taking turkeys to a far-away relative's home may be thwarted by long layovers and lost luggage. This happened to one Atlanta-bound air traveler. She went one way and her luggage (including a frozen turkey) went another. By the time cook and entree were reunited, the turkey was thawed and too warm to be used.

At 6:30 a.m., an on-the-go caller whisked a stuffed turkey from the oven to the back of a trailer and started for the family's vacation home. The caller thought the bird was "warm" upon arrival at 2:00 p.m., but it was not warm enough to be safe. "Meat and poultry products should not be subjected to temperatures between 40° and 140° Fahrenheit for more than two hours. A constant source of heat is needed to keep hot foods safe," said Conley. "Buying and preparing the turkey when you reach your destination may be simpler and safer."

There are calls that are memorable not because of the food handling errors made or prevented, but because of the stories they tell. An unexpected letter received on a hot August day told one of the hotline's most touching Thanksgiving stories. A gentleman wrote to thank the staff for helping him prepare a complete Thanksgiving dinner for the first time. His ailing wife had come home from the hospital just in time for the holidays. Though his wife passed away several months later, he remembered fondly that special dinner which turned out perfectly.

USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline is sponsored by the Food Safety and Inspection Service, the USDA agency which handles meat and poultry inspection and educates the public on the safe handling and preparation of these products.



Release No. 0910.93
Susan Conley (202) 690-0351

SAFETY BROCHURE GUIDES FOR A TAKE-OUT THANKSGIVING

WASHINGTON, Nov. 1 -- Thanksgiving dinner: some don't have time to cook it, some don't want to and some don't know how to. Increasingly, people are relying on restaurants, groceries, the deli or caterers to provide complete meals featuring turkey and all the trimmings.

However, as with home prepared turkey dinners, a safe take-out holiday meal depends on proper consumer handling of foods after the safely-cooked dinner is picked up or delivered.

A new brochure "Safe Handling of Ready Prepared Holiday Turkey Dinners" has been developed by the U. S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service and Extension Service in cooperation with the Food and Drug Administration, the Food Marketing Institute and the National Turkey Federation.

If guidelines in the brochure are followed, take-out meals should be safe as well as convenient.

Publication of the brochure was prompted by numerous calls to the USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline. Callers wanted to know how to handle take-out dinners safely. Some planned to eat the dinner at home and some were taking it in the car to a distant celebration.

The Hotline's technical information specialists talked with food science experts in government and academia as well as consumer advisors, consumer groups, grocery retailers, restaurant representatives and trade groups.

While all saw a growing need for reliable printed information, very little was available. These groups contributed their knowledge and expertise to the production of the new brochure which will be available to consumers this holiday season through grocers and government.

Here is a sample of the advice from "Safe Handling of Ready Prepared Holiday Turkey Dinners."

- o Hot From the Oven: Pick up the food HOT and keep it HOT. Keeping foods warm is not enough. Harmful bacteria multiply fastest between 40° and 140°F. To keep turkey hot, set oven temperature high enough to maintain 140°F or above. (Use a meat thermometer.) Stuffing and side dishes must also stay HOT.
- o Cooked and Refrigerated: Keep cold foods COLD. Refrigerate as soon as you get home (always within 2 hours). Plan to serve your meal within 1-2 days.

Buying a refrigerated, fully cooked, stuffed turkey is NOT recommended.

- o Reheating: Reheat sliced turkey thoroughly to 165°F. until hot and steaming. Bring gravy to a rolling boil. In the microwave oven, cover food and rotate dish so it heats evenly.

For further information about the brochure "Safe Handling of Ready Prepared Holiday Turkey Dinners" or for more information about food safety, call USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-800-535-4555. Washington, D.C. area residents call (202) 720-3333.

The hotline is open weekdays in November from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST (10 a.m. to 4 p.m. the rest of the year). In addition, the hotline will be open on Nov. 20 and 21 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Hours on Thanksgiving Day are 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.



Release No. 0911.93

Susan Conley (202) 690-0351

USDA'S MEAT AND POULTRY HOTLINE DISPELS TURKEY MYTHS

WASHINGTON, Nov. 1 -- Many of us have trouble sorting fact from fiction when it comes to preparing holiday turkey.

Whether it is a question of the best buy or the best and safest cooking method, USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline staff members will answer questions on turkey preparation and other food safety concerns from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (EST) weekdays, Nov. 1-30, at 1-800-535-4555.

Washington, D.C. area residents may call (202) 720-3333.

This year the Hotline has tackled some common turkey myths which can confuse both the novice and experienced cook. "Our goal this year is to guide consumers through the labyrinth of confusing and often conflicting turkey tips," said Susan Conley, manager of the Hotline.

When purchasing your turkey do not be swayed by price, which is not an indication of quality. Look for a USDA- or state- inspected turkey, Grade A. Whether you buy a fresh or frozen, a pre-basted or unbasted bird is based strictly on personal preference and available storage space.

Thawing on the counter may be quick, but it is unsafe. Thaw your turkey in the refrigerator, not on the counter. Bacteria can grow in outer sections at room temperature. How long to defrost? Plan on about 24 hours for every five pounds of bird.

Stuffing turkey the night before, though a time saver, is very risky. Mix your ingredients and stuff the turkey right before the bird is placed in the oven. Making the stuffing ahead may create an environment favorable to the growth of bacteria that could make you sick.

Is it true that cooking the turkey all night at a low temperature produces the best-tasting turkey? Even if this is the way Aunt Sally did it, cooking below 325° F is not recommended. The bird and stuffing can remain in the danger zone too long. Bacteria can grow at these lower temperatures and some produce toxins that continued cooking won't kill. Roast your turkey at 325° F, allowing 15-18 minutes per pound unstuffed, 18-24 minutes per pound stuffed. At the end of the cooking time, a meat thermometer inserted in the meatiest part of the thigh of a stuffed bird should register 180° F; 170° F in a whole, unstuffed turkey or breast only; the stuffing should reach 165° F.

After the turkey is done and the meal is over, be sure to refrigerate the leftovers within two hours. Contrary to popular belief, you must continue to handle cooked foods safely, too.

It is easy to be swayed by the many myths that abound around the holiday season. Quick and easy isn't always safe. To dispel these myths and answer your other food safety questions, call the Hotline. The home economists and registered dietitians can help you prepare a safe, delicious holiday meal. It isn't hard to cook a turkey.



USDA news releases are available by fax the same day they are issued. For information on how to use USDA'S Ag News **FAX** service, use your fax machine's touchtone dialing to call (202) 690-3944. At the voice prompt, press 9 on the phone and then press the start button on your fax machine. Instructions for using the service will be faxed to you.

For further information about this booklet contact Charles Hobbs, editor, News Division, Office of Public Affairs, Room 406-A, U.S Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250 or call (202) 720-4026.
